

FROM THE EDITORS

For such a small island, Rapa Nui generates an amazing amount of activity.

In an effort to get the attention of authorities on the mainland, Rapanui protesters occupied the island's Mataverí airport terminal and parked their vehicles on the runway to prevent aircraft from landing or taking off. LAN flights were cancelled to/from Tahiti, Santiago, and Rapa Nui, stranding hundreds of travelers. The uproar did indeed get attention, at the highest levels: authorities agreed to fly to the island to try and solve some of the islanders' problems. Thus ended the airport takeover and, hopefully, something good may result.

The protestors complained about "...excessive numbers of tourists" and demanded the creation of "tourist cards" for the island; the formation of a council on immigration; and cutting down on the migration of foreigners to the island, especially Chileans. Rapanui allege that many foreigners come to the island and then stay on, thereby generating unsustainable social and economic pressure. Among other items, the Rapanui representatives desire a Consejo de Calificación de Immigration and also they wish to assess an entry fee of US\$100 that will go toward conservation of the island's heritage. This is similar to a law in effect for the Galapagos Islands, which has for some time assessed an "entry fee" to the islands. While some of the Rapanui proposals are probably unconstitutional under Chilean law, islanders say they will press on.

One of the most vexing problems on Rapa Nui is a Chilean law that allows any citizen of the country to live anywhere they wish, within the country. As Rapa Nui is part of Chile, many mainlanders have moved there, looking for an easier or better life. But there are neither controls nor checks, and (according to the Rapanui) many are criminals, causing the crime rate to soar. The newcomers also take jobs that might have gone to islanders, and they place increased stress on the already overburdened health services, etc.

Concerning the island conflict, Senator Jorge Arancibia maintained that, "...with greater restrictions for settling, we could resolve the migration problem". He added that this theme was a central preoccupation of the islanders since the population is now of 50% Rapanui origin with the other half coming from the continent. He said that the worry is the rapidity of increase in the continental sector. Senator Alejandro Navarro, who supported the runway takeover, noted that the National Corporation of Indigenous Development, CONDATI, established a maximum of 10,000 tourists per year, but now the number is "*mas o menos*" 50,000 tourists per year. Whether this includes the thousands of tourists who arrive by cruise ships is not known.

The head of the movement "Rapa Nui Parliament", Mario Tuki, stated that the National Park Service (CONAF) lacks the capacity to administer the island park and to control destruction by visitors. "We need to minimize the arrival of tourists.... It's good for the economy, but on the other hand, it will be a huge destruction of the archaeological patrimony....

They carve, spray paint, throw garbage because CONAF does not have enough funds nor the personnel to administer all of the park", Tuki alleged.

Ah, but that is not all that is brewing on Rapa Nui.

A company called DreamVibe, based in Australia, is promoting a massive musical love-in / event called "Honu Eclipse" to be held on Rapa Nui at the time of next year's total solar eclipse. They plan to stage the festival inland from Ahu Akivi on privately-owned property, and they expect some 2,000 persons who will camp out in the middle of the island. This "Woodstock of the Pacific" seems to be the last thing the island needs (especially to establish a precedent for events like this; next it'll be the solstices, as at Stonehenge). It's bad enough when cruise ships disgorge hundreds of passengers. We can only imagine what kind of a nightmare would ensue with 2,000 revelers, camping in the open fields. Add to the water/toilets/ trash/drug concerns is the likelihood of people climbing onto the *moai* and drunken riots.

Honu Eclipse has been rejected by the native organizations on the island, all of which agree that such an event, with thousands of people, would have a negative impact. It is already estimated that the island will have around 3,500 visitors due to normal tourism, plus those flying in to view the eclipse; the island's hotels all have been booked solid for more than a year.

The head of the National Forestry Corporation CONAF (in charge of protecting areas in danger and buffer ecological zones), Ninoska Kuadros, explained that there are worries concerning the Honu Eclipse event because the area chosen for this festival is within archaeological sites which therefore cannot be protected. "We do not have the capacity to welcome thousands of people", she stated. The Director of SERNATUR (the national tourism agency of the Chilean government) for the region stated that support and sponsorship for this festival was suspended: "There is no co-operation with the community of Easter Island...".

Alberto Hotus, the president of the Council of Elders on Easter Island, said that he did not give his support to this festival because he believes it is a fraud, and the island lacks the capacity to carry out such an event. However, Rocio Zapata, the producer of the event, said that "This is not an electronic party, it is a pacifist gathering, addressed to people interested in ecological and mystical tourism". Stay tuned.

In this issue of *Rapa Nui Journal* we feature a paper by Mara Mulrooney, Thegn Ladefoged, Christopher M. Stevenson, and Sonia Haoa — "The Myth of A.D. 1680: New Evidence from Hanga Ho'onu, Rapa Nui (Easter Island)" — which addresses the theme of societal and environmental collapse on Easter Island in the context of questions about climatic and cultural stability (or lack thereof) centered around the date of 1680 and its place in the perceived as well as recorded history of the island. Also in this issue we feature a paper by Dale F. Simpson, Jr., "Rapa Nui's Political Economy and the Visibility of its Monumental Architecture". It deals with the ancient socio-political economy of Easter Island, and how chief and elites monitored resource sectors in the coastal regions of Rapa Nui. The location of manavai, *umu pae* and

hare umu, hare moa, taheta, and terraces indicate that these features were installed within sight of district *ahu* in order that Rapanui chiefs might oversee and control resource production. This is an interesting and unusual point of view; we are so accustomed to looking *at* an *ahu*, not studying the view *from* the *ahu*, looking inland.

Paul Horley, studying earlier research conducted at ‘Orongo by Georgia Lee, has produced new insights and interpretations concerning the painted and carved slabs from the stone houses there. It is stimulating to see what innovative ideas may be attained in a re-study, using “fresh” eyes. Horley correlates the various numerical designations given the stone houses by diverse visitors and points out the interesting possibility of a vista or “sight” of the sea from ‘Orongo, thus putting the site in new perspective.

Sadly, we have received notice that two “old-time” Rapanuiphiles have died: Veronica du Feu of England, who wrote about the Rapanui language, and Juan Grau of Chile,

who focused on the giant palms that used to thrive on Easter Island. This issue contains their obituaries.

Our “Look Back” dates to 1898 and is a report with the oft-fascinating, oft-hysterical early observations, this time by Captain H.V. Barclay of the Royal Navy. “Easter Island and its Colossal Statues” is annotated by Shawn McLaughlin.

This issue also features brief but interesting pieces by Joan Seaver Kurze, a report by Elaine Crumpley about her three months teaching on the island, as well as reviews covering a range of books and other content, from *rongorongo* to a new coffee-table book by José Miguel Ramírez to an Easter Island-themed photo Web site — plus the usual favorites (“What’s New...”, Publications, and *Moai* Sightings, etc.).

Enjoy!

Georgia Lee & Shawn McLaughlin
Senior Editors

